

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
JOINT MEETING OF THE
SELECT BOARD AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

Date: October 31, 2019

Time: 4:00pm

Place: Town Hall
Egremont

Present at the table were Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Conservation Commission Chairman Bill Tynan. Also present were Conservation Commisison members Alexis Fakelman, Joyce Frater, David Seligman, David Campbell, and Evan Triantafilidis(Berkshire Record).

It was announced that the meeting is video and audio recorded as well as audio recorded by the Berkshire Record reporter.

The meeting was called to discuss accountability and other issues between the Selectboard and the Conservation Commission.

Conservation Commission Chair Bill Tynan clarified for the record that key members of the Conservation Commission had responded that they could not attend the October 2 meeting of the Selectboard, it was not an issue of the members just failing to show up. Selectboard Chairman McGurn responded that the meeting was posted, the posting was never rescinded and 12 members of the public did attend.

Bill Tynan addressed the complaints Egremont citizens made to the Selectboard, clarified that the Commission reports to the state and they adhere to the Wetlands Protection Act. The Commission is often caught between the people who have the issues and the state. He requested that an understanding be reached that the Board will let the Commission know of any issues and that they two address them together. It's a balancing act in a small town between the Wetlands Protection Act and the citizens.

Selectboard Chairman George McGurn noted that the Commissioners are appointed by the Selectboard. Many town boards report both to the state and to the Board. This is not a unique situation. All are doing their best to maintain a balance and no one is perfect. The Board responded to what they perceived as a pattern of imposing controls over citizens without resolution to the underlying issues. The Selectboard agreed to respond positively to the request to refer all issues to the Commission and to resolve them together in the future as long as it is remembered that all need to be responsive to the citizens.

Selectboard Vice-Chair Lucinda Vermeulen spoke of the chatter in public places like the post office and the need to be cautious in reacting to all. She also questioned why Commissioner Alina Hsu was "flying solo" in a prior Selectboard meeting, without the support of the Commission, which to her was problematic and non-collaborative. Chairman Tynan said that the law empowers commissioners to take action as individuals. George said it was not about what one can do but what good judgement would lead one to do. Small issues become big very quickly. Many of the issues have gone through the process of self-correction. Both the Board and the Commission must look toward the future. Issues have been sketched out to let both the Board and Commission address any issues moving forward. All must remember that this is a small town and these are our neighbors. Understanding and empathy with what individuals are going through should be practiced. With the Commission it can be hard because it may be

taking away rights of property owners.

Lucinda Vermeulen thanked the Board for changing its meeting time to an earlier time.

Commission member David Seligman said he was heartened by the willingness to move forward and to recognize the legal complaints. He wondered if the Selectboard could help to repair the damage done to the Commission's reputation. The commission has considerable expertise and knowledge. Residents need to have confidence in the Commission. He asked that the Selectboard express its confidence in the Commission in public. George McGurn noted that he has always prefaced his remarks with recognition of the good results the Commission has achieved in the vast amount of its work.

Commissioner Alexis Fakelman, who has been on the Commission for eight months, said her goal was to get to know Egremont physically, understand landscape issues in Egremont, and make friends. It is important to understand the regulations and enforcement and translate them. This is complicated and its important the Board understand this.

The meeting closed with a consensus agreed that the issues and contentions have been satisfactorily and amicably addressed, resolved and concluded.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

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The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.